

# New Assessment Program Available for Businesses and Schools

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A new assessment program that benefits both businesses and schools is now being offered at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford.

WorkKeys—which is supported by the SWOSU Assessment Center, Southwest Workforce Investment Board and Workforce Oklahoma—is being offered to area businesses and schools

Jan Noble, director of assessment and testing at SWOSU, said more and more employers are using the WorkKeys assessments, both for helping determine who they hire as well as helping to advance current employees. The assessments also give valuable information to the community that can be shared with the Southwest Workforce Investment Board and any kind of economic development entity in the area. Information on the skills of the workforce, especially the emerging workforce represented by seniors in high school, can help attract employers and business to the area and the state.

Oklahoma's Career Ready Certificate program is designed to build a better-trained workforce by developing a portable credential that shows employers that an individual has certain fundamental skills necessary in the workplace, and using WorkKeys assessments to measure skills and provide a common language between educators and businesses.

The WorkKeys assessment was recently completed by 23 seniors at Burns Flat-Dill City High School. The assessment included locating information, reading for information and applied mathematics.

Results showed that the majority of Burns Flat-Dill City High School seniors are prepared for the job market. Burns Flat-Dill City High School Principal Joe Oliver and Guidance Counselor Cheri Lou Gastineau said seniors took three of ACT's WorkKeys assessments as part of Oklahoma's Career Ready Certificate program.

The results showed 96 percent of the students passed the tests with 65 percent qualifying for a Silver or Gold Career Ready Certificate, which means they achieved a Level 4 or higher on all three tests. Seven other students qualified for a Bronze Certificate (achieving a Level 3 or higher on all assessments). This makes them job ready for over 80% of jobs available in today's environment.

"We were really proud of our students and how well they did," Gastineau said.

She explained the Locating Information section tested skills such as comparing and contrasting information from graphs, charts and tables. The Reading for Information portion tested skills used when reading such things as memos, letters, directions and policies. The Applied Mathematics section tested students' reasoning and problem solving skills in an employment environment.

Although the scores from the BF-DC seniors were uniformly high, the assessments do not just benefit those who scored well.

"If the student didn't score as well as they wanted to, there is a remediation piece where

they can go online to work on their skills and help improve their scores,” Noble said.

Noble said other high schools are welcome to have their students take advantage of the opportunity to take the WorkKeys assessments and earn a certificate.

Noble and her staff may be contacted for testing at 580.774.7084.